

And if we seen him winne honour,
Richesse or preys, thurgh his valour,
Provende, rent, or dignitee,
ful fast, ywis, compassen we
By what ladder he is clomben so;
And for to maken him down to go,
With traisoun we wole him defame,
And doon him lese his gode name.
Thus from his ladder we him take,
And thus his freendis foes we make;
But word ne wite shal he noon,
Til alle his freendis been his foon.
for if we dide it openly,
We might have blame redily;
for hadde he wist of our malyce,
He hadde him kept, but he were nyce.
NO^THER is this, that, if so falle
That ther be oon among us alle
That doth a good turn, out of
drede,
We seyn it is our alder dede.
Ye, sikely, though he it feyned,
Or that him list, or that him deynd
A man thurgh him avaunced be;
Therof alle parceners be we,
And tellen folk, wherso we go,
That man thurgh us is sprongen so.
And for to have of men preysing,
We purchase, thurgh our flatering,
Of riche men, of gret poustee,
Lettres, to witnessse our bountee;
So that man weneth, that may us see,
That alle vertu in us be.
And alwey pore we us feyne;
But how so that we begge or pleyne,
We ben the folk, without lesing,
That al thing have without having.
Thus be we dred of the puple, ywis.
And gladly my purpos is this:
I dele with no wight, but he
Have gold and tresour gret plentee;
hir acquyentaunce wel love I;
This is moche my desyr, shortly.
I entremete me of brocages,
I make pees and mariages,
I am gladly executour,
And many tymes procuratour;
I am somtyme messenger;
That falleth not to my mister.
And many tymes I make enquestes;
for me that office not honest is;
To dele with other mennes thing,
That is to me a gret lyking.
And if that ye have ought to do
In place that I repire to,
I shal it speden thurgh my wit,
As sone as ye have told me it.
So that ye serve me to pay,
My servyse shal be your alway.
But whoso wol chastyse me,
Anoon my love lost hath he;
for I love no man in no gyse,
306

That wol me repreve or chastyse;
But I wolde al folk undirtake,
And of no wight no teching take;
for I, that other folk chastyse,
Wol not be taught fro my folye.
LO^VE noon hermitage more;
Alle desertes, and holtes hore,
And grete wodes everichoon,
I lete hem to the Baptist Johan.
I quethe him quyte, and him relese
Of Egypt al the wildirnesse;
To fer were alle my mansiouns
fro alle citees and goode tounes.
My paleis and myn hous make I
There men may renne in openly,
And sey that I the world forsake.
But al amidde I bilde and make
My hous, and swimme and pley therinne
Bet than a fish doth with his finne.
Of Antecristes men am I,
Of whiche that Crist seith openly,
They have abit of holinesse,
And liven in such wikkednesse.
Outward, lambren semen we,
fulle of goodnesse and of pitee,
And inward we, withouten fable,
Ben gredy wolves ravisable.
We enviroune bothe londe and see;
With al the world werreyen we;
We wol ordeyne of alle thing,
Of folkes good, and her living.
If ther be castel or citee
Wherin that any bougerons be,
Although that they of Milayne
were,
for therof ben they blamed there;
Or if a wight, out of mesure,
Wolde lene his gold, and take usure,
for that he is so covetous:
Or if he be to lecherous,
Or thefe, or haunte simonye;
Or provost, ful of trecherye,
Or prelat, living jolily,
Or prest that halt his quene him by;
Or olde hores hostilers,
Or other bawdes or bordillers,
Or elles blamed of any vyce,
Of whiche men shulden doon justice:
By alle the seyntes that we pray,
But they defende hem with lamprey,
With luce, with elis, with samons,
With tendre gees, and with capons,
With tartes, or with cheses fat,
With deynte flawnes, brode and flat,
With caleweys, or with pullaille,
With coninges, or with fyn vitaille,
That we, undir our clothes wide,
Maken thurgh our golet glyde:
Or but he wol do come in haste
Roo venisoun, ybake in paste;
Whether so that he loure or groine,
He shal have of a corde a loigne,

With whiche men shal him binde and lede,
To brenne him for his sinful dede,
That men shulle here him crye and rore
A myle wey aboute, and more.
Or elles he shal in prisoun dye,
But if he wol our frendship bye,
Or smerten that that he hath do,
More than his gilt amounteth to.
But, and he couthe thurgh his sleight
Do maken up a tour of height,
Nought roughte I whether of stone or tree,
Or erthe, or turves though it be,
Though it were of no vounde stone,
Wrought with squyre and scantilone,
So that the tour were stuffed wel
With alle richesse temporel;
And thanne, that he wolde updresse
Engyns, bothe more and lesse,
To caste at us, by every syde,
To bere his goode name wyde,
Such sleightes as I shal yow nevene,
Bavelles of wyne, by sixe or sevene,
Or gold in sakkes gret plente,
He shulde sone delivered be.
And if he have noon sich pitaunces,
Late him study in equipolences,
And lete lyes and fallaces,
If that he wolde deserve our graces;
Or we shal bere him such witnessse
Of sinne, and of his wrecchidnesse,
And doon his loos so wyde renne,
That al quik we shulde him brenne,
Or elles yewe him suche penaunce,
That is wel wors than the pitaunce.
OR thou shalt never, for nothing,
Con knowne aught by her clothing
The traitours fulle of trecherye,
But thou her werkis can aspye.
And ne hadde the good keping be
Whylom of the universitee,
That kepeth the key of Cristendome,
They had been turmented, alle and some.
Suche been the stinking fals prophetis;
Nis non of hem, that good prophete is;
for they, thurgh wikked entencion,
The yeer of the incarnacioun
A thousand and two hundred yeer,
fyve and fifty, ferther ne ner,
Broughten a book, with sory grace,
To yeven ensample in comune place,
That seide thus, though it were fable:
This is the Gospel Perdurable,
That fro the Holy Goost is sent.
Wel were it worth to ben ybrent.
Entitled was in such manere
This book, of which I telle here.
Ther nas no wight in al Parys,
Biforn Our Lady, at parvyys,
That he ne mighte bye the book,
To copy, if him talent took.
Ther might he see, by greet tresoun,
ful many fals comparisoun:
x2

As moche as, thurgh his grete might,
Be it of hete, or of light,
The sunne sourmounteth the mone,
That troubler is, and chaungeth sone,
And the note/kernel the shelle
(I scorne nat that I yow telle)
Right so, withouten any gyle,
Sourmounteth this noble Evangyle
The word of any evangelist.
And to her title they token Christ;
And many such comparisoun,
Of which I make no mencion,
Might men in that boke finde,
Whoso coude of hem have minde.
THE universitee, that tho was
Aslepe,
Can for to braide, and taken kepe;
And at the noys the heed upcaste,
Ne never sithen slepte it faste,
But up it sterte, and armes took
Ayens this fals horrible book,
Al redy bateil for to make,
And to the juge the book to take.
But they that broughten the book there
Hente it anoon away, for fere;
They nolde shewe it more a del,
But thenne it kepste, and kepen wil,
Til such a tyme that they may see
That they so stronge woxen be,
That no wight may hem wel withstonde;
for by that book they durst not stonde.
Away they gonne it for to bere,
for they ne durste not answeere
By expositioun ne glose
To that that clerkis wole appose
Ayens the cursednesse, ywis,
That in that boke writen is.
Now wot I not, ne I can not see
What maner ende that there shal be
Of al this boke that they hyde;
But yit algate they shal abyde
Til that they may it bet defende;
This trowe I best, wol be hir ende.
THUS Antecrist abyden we,
for we ben alle of his meynce;
And what man that wol not be so,
Right sone he shal his lyf forgo.
We wol a puple on him areyse,
And thurgh our gyle doon him seise,
And him on sharpe speris ryve,
Or other weyes bringe him fro lyve,
But if that he wol folowe, ywis,
That in our boke writen is.
Thus moche wol our book signifye,
That whyl that Peter hath maistrye,
May never Johan shewe wel his might.
NO^T have I you declared right
The mening of the bark and rinde
That makith the entencions
blinde.
But now at erst I wol biginne
To expowne you the pith withinne:
307